

**For Immediate Release
July 11, 2008**



Contacts:
Ashley Nasser
(818) 728-3350 x352
anasser@edisongroup.com
Larry Krutchik
(818) 728-3350 x355
lkrutchik@edisongroup.com

STATEMENT ON THE CLOSURE OF ALAMEDA COUNTY'S HEALTHY KIDS PROGRAM

Los Angeles, Calif. – On behalf of the California Children's Health Initiatives (CCHI), Project Director Debra Ward issued the following statement concerning the July 8, 2008 announcement of the closure of Alameda County's locally funded Health Kids program.

“We are deeply saddened by the closure of the Alameda County Healthy Kids program. We know that everything possible was done to prevent this from happening but the Alameda County Healthy Kids program simply could not continue given diminishing local resources and the lack of sustainable funding through state health care reform.

Healthy Kids programs in other counties, including the Greater Los Angeles program (the largest in the state) unfortunately find themselves in a similar situation. Even those Healthy Kids programs that are not on the brink of needing to disenroll children from the program, or closure, face future instability, as local and private funding for the Healthy Kids programs was, for the most part, never designed to be long-term. Instead, the majority of Healthy Kids programs were launched as a bridge solution while state policymakers pledged to expand coverage for children.

Since their inception in 2001, Children's Health Initiatives have been models of success, building strong community-based partnerships and cumulatively enrolling more than 150,000 children into Healthy Kids programs plus hundreds of thousands additional children into Medi-Cal and Healthy Families. Moreover, independent studies have shown that Healthy Kids programs have improved the well-being of children and their families, and have led to a statistically significant drop in avoidable hospitalizations and school absences. Providing kids with health insurance works – for kids, for families, and for the future of California.

The closure of the Alameda County Healthy Kids program should thus send a loud and clear signal to our state leaders of the consequences of failure to enact health care reform. Indeed, California's children now face a double whammy as proposed state budget cuts, if enacted, will cause up to 350,000 kids to lose their health care coverage.

We cannot afford to see the progress we've made in children's coverage unravel. We therefore urge the Governor and our State Legislators to fulfill their commitment to cover California's kids.”

About the California Children's Health Initiatives:

The California Children's Health Initiatives (CCHI) is a collaboration of 30 local Children's Health Initiatives (CHIs) dedicated to ensuring that all California children have access to quality health coverage. Together, the CHIs emphasize streamlined enrollment into Healthy Families, Medi-Cal and Healthy Kids insurance programs, and share a goal of creating and maintaining a sustainable health care program for all children in California.

###